

Town of Longport
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
South end of Absecon Island on County Road 629
Longport
Atlantic County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1034

HABS
NJ
I-LNPT,
I-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HAB
NJ
1-LNPT,
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF LONGPORT

HABS No. NJ-1034

Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, South end of Absecon Island on County Road 629, Atlantic County, New Jersey.

Significance: The Borough of Longport, incorporated in 1898, belongs to that category of seaside resort towns that were established by developers during the late nineteenth century, after the areas were opened up by the railroads. While the other Absecon Island communities--Margate and Ventnor, located just south of Atlantic City--were originally part of Atlantic City sharing the same developmental history, Longport, the smallest and most southern of the towns on Absecon Island, developed independently. Today, Atlantic City has subsumed the island, claiming Longport as a suburb.

History: At one time, M.S. McCullough owned the entire area which was to become Longport. He bought the property from James Long of Philadelphia in 1882, at which time it was described as "an absolutely primitive waste." It must not have been too unmanageable, however, since he was offering building lots for sale that same year. By 1884, there were four "cottages" and a restaurant, and train service had begun. In 1893, nine years later, an electric train was running between Longport and Atlantic City.¹

Transportation services were also available to Ocean City and Somers Point from Longport. The Camden & Atlantic Railroad ran steamboats across the Great Egg Harbor Inlet between their tracks in Ocean City and Somers Point to the trolley terminus in Longport. Three steamboats were employed, at first, with two more being added in 1900 and 1905. They were named the "Avalon," the "Longport," the "Somers Point," the "Ocean City," and the "Wildwood," all after nearby shore communities. The routes were successful until 1918 when a new highway was built connecting the three communities. Steamboat service was stopped on January 1, 1919.²

Longport continued to grow during the last years of the nineteenth century. Water service was provided "in abundance" by an artesian well after the Longport Water and Light Company was established in 1895. A writer in 1899 stated that "the Longport driveway will be the great feature of development for the season of 1899...Not only will it vastly stimulate the use of horses for both the saddle and carriage...but undoubtedly it will bring into service the new automobile type of carriage...more

¹ John F. Hall, The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County, New Jersey (Atlantic City: The Daily Union Printing Company, 1900), 120-21.

² W. George Cook, "Railroad Steamboats on the Great Egg Harbor Inlet," in West Jersey Rails (Conshohocken, Pa: Crusader Printing, 1983), 9-14.

hotels and homes are to be the order of the early future."³ In 1901, a mere two years after it was incorporated, the population was reported to be 150.⁴

Today, like the other shore resorts, Longport is characterized by dense residential development with few commercial intrusions. The existing housing is mixed in age, with older homes standing alongside more modern structures. Longport looks out over the Great Egg Harbor and calls itself "the Best Port, friendly, progressive, residential." Atlantic Avenue winds along the water, past an old municipal building occupied by the coast guard, the volunteer fire company and several stores. On the beach side, single family homes and condominiums push right up to the beach, separated from the sand by a low cement wall. Atlantic City curves around to the north, visually placing Longport as its suburb.

Prepared by: Camille Gatz
HABS Historian
Summer 1991

Sources: Cook, W. George. "Railroad Steamboats on the Great Egg Harbor Inlet," in West Jersey Rails (Conshohocken PA: Crusader Printing, 1983), 9-14.

Hall, John F. The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County, New Jersey. Atlantic City: The Daily Union Printing Company, 1900.

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1991.

"A 1901 Industrial Directory." Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook. (October 1988): 26-7.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatz (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.

³ Hall, Daily Union History, 117, 125.

⁴ "A 1901 Industrial Directory," in Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook (October 1988), 26.